

The Hemlocks
504 Morris Avenue
Springfield, Union County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

HABS
N.J.
20. SPRING
2'

The Hemlocks
504 Morris Avenue
Springfield, Union County, New Jersey

Owner: ^{Lewis C.}~~Lewis~~ Tower, Maplewood

Date of Erection: Wing about 1780; main house
about 1820

Architect

Builder:

Present Condition: Fair

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - frame construction, clapboards

Interior walls - plaster

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - gambrel, dormers

Historical Data:

There is considerable difference of opinion as to the date of erection. Mr. William Sommers, eighty-two year old resident of Milburn and a life-long real estate man, claims that the house was built somewhere between 1785-1795 by Abner Stites. However, according to the genealogy of the Stites family as told by Clayton Abner Stites settled at Turkey, now New Providence, and appears to have remained there for the rest of his life.

Mrs. Edward Mosher, another resident of Springfield, says that the house was built by William Steel about 1790. She bases this statement upon the fact that when one of the old fireplaces was opened partly burned bills for school supplies dated little after 1800 were found. William Steel was clerk for Springfield. According to Clayton he held that position until 1790.

Unfortunately, the Essex County records are not much help in this case. They show that in 1847 Calvin Bonnel et als, heirs of one Sylvanus Bonnel, sold the property to Edwin Clayton for sixty-one hundred dollars. A close search of the records at Trenton failed to add very much to the story. However, there is an inventory of Silvanus Bonnel (so spelled in Trenton) under the date of February 3, 1826 in which is described the furnishings of the west front room, the south front room, east back room, north back room and so on. The description of these rooms fits the rooms of the present house. Further, a will of John Bonnel, the father of Sylvanus, made in the year 1818, fails to mention that Sylvanus inherited the house. John Bonnel left his "Mansion House" to his wife, and a will of his wife shows that she gave her share to her four daughters. However, Sylvanus received the land in Chatham and another piece that fits fairly well the description of the tract of land upon which this house stands. There is mention that on this latter property, there is a house, mills, etc. The wing is obviously earlier than the main part. It has hewn timbers and a Dutch oven; therefore, we have assumed that the wing was the old farm house Sylvanus inherited from his father John, and that Sylvanus, who from all accounts was a man of considerable means, erected the present house upon this property using the old farm house as the kitchen wing. The timbers of the larger part were sawed on the molly mill. The date of erection for the larger part is about 1820 with Sylvanus Bonnel as the probable builder.

Incidentally the house was named The Hemlocks by a former tenant who conducted a road stand there under that name. The name has no special significance.

Bibliography:

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Mrs. Edward Mosher

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Essex County Office

Walter Clark
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer

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